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[ASU State Press](#)

Lawmakers representing Tempe on the state and national level told a meeting of the ASU Young Democrats their participation in the 2010 Congressional and state legislative elections is "vital".

U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell joined state Reps. Ed Ableser and David Schapira in the meeting at the Tempe campus' Discovery Hall Friday to talk to about 150 students concerning the elections, the economy, health care reform and the state budget.

Each lawmaker stressed the importance of participation and called on the students to encourage their peers to take an active interest in politics.

Mitchell said too many young people become cynical about politics at a young age, choosing not to participate because they are distrustful of both sides of the political spectrum. Many elections, he said, are a matter of choosing between the lesser of two evils.

"There is going to be an election, whether you vote or not and you don't want a bunch of jerks [in office]," he said.

Ableser and Schapira both said young people need to pay more attention to politics at the state level. Ableser pointed to the funding cuts to the University, which he said prompted tuition increases and the economic recovery surcharge, examples of how state politics affect students.

"You have the opportunity to advocate for issues that affect you in your everyday life," said

Ableser.

The representatives also discussed issues affecting their particular levels of government. Mitchell explained his position on health care reform in response to a student's question. He said he would only support President Barack Obama's idea of a public health care option if it does not undercut the market price of health insurance.

"If we could have a public option that is truly competitive, then I would support it," Mitchell said. "If it levels the playing field and if it does not pay under-market rates, I will support it."

Mitchell added that the debate surrounding the issue has been complicated by the fact that there are several different versions of the bill in the House and Senate - and Obama has not endorsed any of them.

"He does not have a bill yet," Mitchell said. "There are five different bills out there right now."

Ableser and Schapira also took the opportunity to take shots at the Republican majority in the state Legislature, which they blamed for the delays in passing the 2010 state budget.

Ableser said Gov. Jan Brewer's proposed sales tax hike, which would give additional tax incentives to businesses in the state after three years, is misleading.

"It is a bait and switch," Ableser said. "They're trying to get the Democrats to vote for this sales tax increase of one percent and then cut corporation taxes, and put that burden on the lower- and middle-income families."

Schapira again stressed the importance of student participation and said student support was instrumental in putting him and Ableser in office.

"The only way to make the situation better is to elect more Democrats," Schapira said.

Political science and philosophy sophomore Erica Pederson, vice president of the Young Democrats, said the two legislators play an important role in replacing the state leadership she blames for millions of dollars in cuts to education and budget process delays.

"There's not a lot they can do because they're in the minority [party], but they can get the word out to vote the Republicans out of office," Pederson said.